

VZCZCXRO5072
OO RUEHGH
DE RUEHUL #0588/01 1000705
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 100705Z APR 09
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3978
RUCPDO/USDOC WASHDC 8415
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC//DDI/OEA//
RHHMUNA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI//FPA//
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC//DB-Z//
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 9528
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5657
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 5748
RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 0555
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 4208
RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI 3206
RUEHGP/AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE 6422
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0824
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2174
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1231
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1847

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 SEOUL 000588

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [ECON](#) [KPAO](#) [KS](#) [US](#)
SUBJECT: SEOUL - PRESS BULLETIN; April 10, 2009

TOP HEADLINES

Chosun Ilbo, Hankyoreh Shinmun, Segye Ilbo, All TVs
Taekwang Industrial CEO Park Yeon-cha: "I Gave \$1 Million
Cash in a Bag to Former President Roh through His Secretary"

JoongAng Ilbo
Former President Roh's Son is the Largest Shareholder of a Company
that was Established with \$5 Million President Roh's Nephew-In-Law
Received from Taekwang CEO

Dong-a Ilbo
Prosecution Set to "Indict President Roh on Charges of Receiving \$6
Million in Bribes from Taekwang CEO"

Hankook Ilbo, Seoul Shinmun
Former President Roh Received \$1 Million at Blue House

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

The ROKG criticized the Japanese government yesterday for approving
another history textbook that allegedly glosses over Japan's wartime
past. Foreign Ministry Spokesman Moon Tae-young said in a
statement: "We strongly protest the Japanese government's approval
of the history textbook based on its erroneous history perception...
We urge Japan to correct this immediately." (All)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

According to the April 9 issue of Japan's Yomiuri Shimbun, the U.S.
and Japan have given up on a UN Security Council resolution against
North Korea's rocket launch and instead are seeking a non-binding
"chairman's statement." (Hankyoreh)

According to the (North) Korean Central News Agency, the first
session of North Korea's Supreme People's Assembly yesterday
re-elected Kim Jong-il Chairman of the powerful National Defense
Commission. (All)

The North's rubber-stamp parliament also revised the country's Constitution for the first time in 11 years, and appointed Jang Sung-taek, Chairman Kim's brother-in-law touted as the second most powerful figure in the North, as a member of the National Defense Commission. These moves seemed intended to solidify Kim's rule and to lay the groundwork for a successor. (All)

MEDIA ANALYSIS

-North Korea

Left-leaning Hankyoreh Shinmun gave attention to an April 9 report by Japan's Yomiuri Shimbun that the U.S. and Japan have given up on a UN Security Council resolution against North Korea's rocket launch and instead are seeking a non-binding "chairman's statement."

Yesterday's opening of the first session of North Korea's 12th Supreme People's Assembly received wide coverage. Citing the (North) Korean Central News Agency, the ROK media reported that Kim Jong-il was re-elected Chairman of the powerful National Defense Commission. The media also noted the rubber-stamp parliament's revision of the country's Constitution for the first time in 11 years and the appointment of Jang Sung-taek, Chairman Kim's brother-in-law touted as the second most powerful figure in the North, as a member of the National Defense Commission. The ROK media viewed these moves as intended to solidify Kim's rule and to

SEOUL 00000588 002 OF 004

lay the groundwork for a successor.

Moderate Hankook Ilbo editorialized: "It remains to be seen whether the third Kim Jong-il regime will overcome internal and external challenges and maintain stability. This is because uncertainty still lingers over who will succeed Kim Jong-il and because the North is unlikely to achieve its publicly stated goal of building a great, prosperous and powerful socialist nation by 2012, the centennial anniversary of founder Kim Il-sung's birth. ... Another important factor in determining the success or failure of the third Kim Jong-il regime is how to manage relations with the U.S. and the ROK. For the North ... to move toward a normal state, assistance and cooperation from the outside world is essential. As long as the North insists on becoming a military power by developing nuclear weapons and missiles, it cannot expect any help from the international community. ... We hope that Chairman Kim will face up to reality and promptly make a wise decision to return to the Six-Party Talks and to break the deadlock in inter-Korean relations."

U.S. to Engage in Nuclear Talks with Iran

Most of the ROK media led their international news section with a report on the Obama Administration's April 8 announcement - that it will participate directly in multilateral talks with Iran over its suspect nuclear program - and Iran's positive response to the U.S. overture.

Chosun Ilbo wrote in the headline: "Significant Progress Made in Realizing First-ever 'Seven-Party' Talks on the Iranian Issue." Moderate Hankook Ilbo's headline read: "The Mood is Ripe for Dialogue between U.S. and Iran." Left-leaning Hankyoreh Shinmun headlined its article: "U.S. to Engage in Direct Nuclear Talks with Iran." Conservative Segye Ilbo's headline read: "Obama to Resolve Iran's Nuclear Issue through Direct Dialogue." Moderate Seoul Shinmun's headline said: "U.S Proposes Direct Talks, with Iran Opening a Fuel Manufacturing Plant to Mark National Nuclear Day."

Right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo's Editorial Writer Bae Myung-bok observed: "It appears that the U.S. is intending to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue through the Six-Party Talks and the Iranian nuclear issue through the Seven-Party Talks. This position is a drastic shift from the policy of the Bush Administration which shunned dialogue with Iran. ... This changed paradigm of U.S. diplomacy will likely affect U.S. North Korea policy soon. If the dust settles over North Korea's failed long-distance rocket launch, the Six-Party Talks and U.S.-North Korea talks are expected to

resume in earnest. ... This may lead to delicate conflicts between the U.S. and the ROK over the speed of the processes. ... In an interview with foreign media during his visit to the U.K. last week, President Lee Myung-bak hinted at the possibility of sending a special envoy to North Korea. This is an opportune time to do so. Why haven't we thought of taking preemptive action before we might be in a position of looking at the U.S. in bewilderment?"

OPINIONS/EDITORIALS

OBAMA'S 'RESET DIPLOMACY' AND LEE MYUNG-BAK'S CHOICE
(JoongAng Ilbo, April 10, 2009, Page 47)

By editorial writer Bae Myung-bok

U.S. President Barack Obama's diplomatic moves are dizzyingly bold. It seems that he is obsessed with making visible accomplishments in the economic and diplomatic areas within 100 days after taking office, as former President Roosevelt did during the Great Depression.

Yesterday, the U.S. proposed to hold multilateral talks with Iran involving 7 countries, consisting of the 5 permanent members of the UN Security Council with Germany and Iran. It appears that the U.S. is intending to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue through the Six Party Talks and the Iranian nuclear issue through the Seven-Party talks. This position is a drastic shift from the policy

SEOUL 00000588 003 OF 004

of the Bush Administration which shunned dialogue with Iran.

A change in Obama's Iran policy was anticipated when he delivered surprising remarks to the Iranian people on March 20. In a video message released in time for Iran's biggest holiday Nowruz, he said that the U.S. will pursue a sincere alliance with Iran based on mutual respect. He proposed that the two countries put an end to any old antagonisms through constructive cooperation. President Obama did not forget to praise the greatness of the Iranian civilization. The U.S. invited Iran to an international conference regarding aid to Afghanistan which took place in Hague last week. Iran has shown a favorable response to Obama's repeated conciliatory gestures. There are signs that the rift between the two countries is gradually being bridged.

In his inaugural address, Obama extended a conciliatory gesture to hostile countries. In fact, he is extending his hands throughout the world, seeking for others to release their fists. This might be called a "high five diplomacy" which changes the paradigm of U.S. diplomacy.

Obama's conciliatory gestures are seen everywhere. He began his term by signing an executive order closing the detention camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. He sent a s-e-c-r-e-t letter to Russian President Dmitry Anatolyevich Medvedev, suggesting that if Russia cooperates in resolving the Iranian nuclear issue, the U.S. could review its plan to implement the Missile Defense (MD) system in Eastern Europe. He expressed his willingness to have dialogue with Afghanistan's moderate Taliban. The U.S. seems to be in a "honeymoon" period, similar to the era of the Kennedy Administration, with Western European countries that had borne a grudge against the previous U.S. (Bush) administration. The U.S. dispatched a special envoy to the hostile state of Syria. The U.S. announcement that it is not staging a war against Islam and will never (stage such a war) drew praise. The U.S. is also beginning to engage in talks with its five-decade old enemy Cuba.

Obama is not forcing his stance (onto other countries), but keeps a low profile while listening carefully. Therefore, instead of speaking about democracy, he appears compliant to wishes of the international community regarding climate change, nuclear test bans and nuclear reduction. He is improving America's image with smart power, which combines hard power with soft power, and speaks of a "new start" and a "reset."

This changed paradigm of U.S. diplomacy will likely affect the U.S.

- North Korea policy soon. If the dust settles over North Korea's failed long-distance rocket launch, the Six-Party Talks and U.S.-North Korea talks are expected to resume in earnest. Of course, it appears that the U.S. is in step with the ROKG, but shouldn't stop the movement towards a compromise. This may lead to delicate conflicts between the U.S. and North Korea over the speed of the processes. There is a possibility that the ROK may have little room to maneuver when trying to keep pace with the U.S.

During the global economic crisis, China's status is increasingly growing. This trend would leave the ROK sandwiched between the U.S. and China. To overcome this situation, it is essential to improve inter-Korean relations. Rockets are one thing, and talks are another. In an interview with foreign media during his visit to the U.K. last week, President Lee Myung-bak hinted at the possibility of sending a special envoy to North Korea. This is an opportune time to do so. Why haven't we thought of taking preemptive action before we might be in a position of looking at the U.S. in bewilderment?

NOTEWORTHY LAUNCH OF KIM JONG-IL'S THIRD TERM
(Hankook Ilbo, April 10, 2009, Page 35)

North Korea opened the third term of the Kim Jong-il regime yesterday by re-electing Chairman of the National Defense Commission Kim as its leader at the first session of the 12th Supreme People's Assembly. Although the details were not given, the North reportedly revised its socialist constitution after 11 years and strengthened

SEOUL 00000588 004 OF 004

the National Defense Commission to bolster the third Kim Jong-il regime.

Although the event was initially planned as a reaffirmation of Kim's military-first politics, there are other aspects worth giving attention to. First of all, it is noteworthy that while celebrating a "satellite launch," the North flaunted the restoration of Kim's health and his control of the nation both internally and externally.

After all, the North's rocket launch in defiance of the international community was geared towards creating a favorable atmosphere in the North and solidifying the regime. It is also notable that Chairman Kim's brother-in-law Jang Sung-taek, the first Vice-Director of the Workers' Party of Korea and reportedly the second most powerful figure in the North, was newly elected to the National Defense Commission, where he is expected to play a role in the succession issue.

However, it remains to be seen whether the third Kim Jong-il regime will overcome internal and external challenges and maintain stability. This is because uncertainty still lingers over who will succeed Kim Jong-il and because the North is unlikely to achieve its publicly stated goal of building a great, prosperous and powerful socialist nation by 2012, the centennial anniversary of founder Kim Il-sung's birth. Although the North began conducting a campaign with revolutionary fervor and mobilizing its residents on a large scale earlier this year, the DPRK cannot overcome its serious economic difficulties, such as chronic food shortages, on its own.

Another important factor in determining the success or failure of the third Kim Jong-il regime is how to manage its relations with the U.S. and the South. For the North, which lost its momentum due to the rigidity of the regime and the inefficiency of socialism, to escape the pitfalls of starvation and move toward a normal state, assistance and cooperation from outside is essential. As long as the North insists on becoming a military power by developing nuclear weapons and missiles, it cannot expect any help from the international community. If the North seeks a better bargaining position by creating tension with its long-range rocket launch, it is a big miscalculation. We hope that Chairman Kim will face up to reality and promptly make a wise decision to return to the Six-Party Talks and break the deadlock in inter-Korean relations.

STEPHENS